

Message Text

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67

ACTION NEA-10

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LONDON 14674

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, LE, SY

SUBJECT: FINANCIAL TIMES REPORT ON SYRIAN SAMS IN

LEBANON

1. FINANCIAL TIMES OF SEPTEMBER 16 CARRIES STORY FROM ITS CORRESPONDENT IHSAN HIJAZI IN BEIRUT THAT SYRIANS "HAVE REPORTEDLY COMPLETED THE SETTING UP OF A NETWORK OF SURFACE-TO-AIR MISSILES IN LEBANON'S WESTERN BEKAA REGION, AND THEY ARE ALL AIMED SOUTHWARD IN THE DIRECTION OF ISRAEL". STORY CONTINUES THAT "ACCORDING TO RELIABLE LEFT-WING SOURCES, THE NETWORK OF SOVIET-MADE SAM 6 AND SAM 7 MISSILES EXTEND THE SYRIAN DEFENSE LINES WELL INTO LEBANESE TERRITORY...THE MISSILE NETWORK IS ABOUT 13 MILES FROM THE ISRAELI BORDER." THESE SAMS HAVE A SOVIET IMPROVEMENT IN THE LAUNCHER "WHICH CAN FIRE THREE ROCKETS SIMULTANEOUSLY...THE SYRIANS RECEIVED THE NEW SUPPLIES ONLY DURING THE PAST YEAR".

2. STORY CONTINUES THAT THIS INFORMATION HAS HAD "A POSITIVE EFFECT ON CERTAIN SECTIONS OF THE LEBANESE LEFT-WING MOVEMENT" AND THAT THE LATTER WOULD THEREFORE NOW AGREE TO THE SYRIANS REMAINING IN LEBANON IF THEY CON-

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CENTRATE IN THE BEKAA VALLEY AND WITHDRAW FROM JEZZIN,

SO FAR, AND THE NORTH.

3. FCO NEAR EAST DEPARTMENT AS OF SEPTEMBER 16 HAS NO
CONFIRMATION OF THIS STORY FROM ITS OWN SOURCES.
SHOULD BE NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT BRITISH MIDDLE EAST
SPECIALISTS BOTH IN AND OUT OF GOVERNMENT TEND TO AGREE
THAT FINANCIAL TIMES REPORTING ON MIDDLE EAST IS THE MOST
STIMULATING AND INFORMATIVE OF ANY NEWSPAPER OR MAGAZINE
IN BRITAIN TODAY, AND HIJAZI STORY IS ATTRACTING SOME
ATTENTION HERE.
ARMSTRONG

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